

RECKLESS RALPH'S

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.
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No. 104

BEADLES DIME LIBRARY NO. 517

By W. M. Burns

It is general knowledge among Beadle collectors that the Dime Library ran to 1009 issues with the house of Beadle as publishers. Starting with number 1010 Ivers took over as publisher and ran the Library to the end, which ceased with number 1103.

From number 1010 onward the Library contained very few original stories. Largely reprints of early stories of the same Library, plus a few reprints from Campfire Library. (Sea stories by Prof. J. H. Ingraham.)

In only one case do I know of an Ivers reprint being published under its original low number. There may be more than one, but personally number 517 is the only one that has ever come to my notice.

I have two copies of 517, both Ivers reprints, both having their original volume number 40 and consecutive number 517. They also contain their original date of publication, which was September 19, 1888.

Yet, as we know, Beadle was the publisher of this series up to February 23, 1898, which was the date of publication of number 1009.

So it seems that in reprinting, Ivers used the original cover plate making no change whatever in it except to substitute his name as publisher, in place of Beadles.

If, (as may be possible) this is the only Ivers reprint published under its original date and number, just why was it done?

Logically it should be numbered somewhere above number 1009. Per-

haps some good Brother can explain just why it was done. I for one would welcome an explanation and would appreciate knowing if Ivers reprinted any others of the Dime Library under their original low numbers.

Incidentally, this tale contains the same cover illustration as does Beadles Pocket Library number 388. A picture of a Pony Express rider on his run.

As the Pocket Library number 388 is dated June 17, 1891 it proves that the original large Dime illustration was reduced in size and reproduced for Pocket number 388. However it may be possible that the original drawing may have been used to illustrate some tale in some of the earlier Beadle story papers.

I know little about the Beadle story papers beyond the fact that a very large percentage of their serials and illustrations afterward were reprinted in Beadles Dime Library, Beadles Pocket Library, Beadles Half Dime Library, etc.

Now something about the tale itself in Beadles Dime Library number 517. It is titled "Buffalo Bill's First Trail; or, Will Cody, the Pony Express Rider" and written by Ned Buntline. (Col. E. Z. C. Judson).

One of the best of Buntline's tales in my opinion although not historically accurate. However it has always been the privilege of fiction writers to juggle historical facts to suit themselves, so nothing wrong in Buntline's doing so.

It depicts Will Cody at the age of EIGHTEEN riding Pony Express. (When Cody had reached the age of

eighteen the Pony Express was no longer in existence, if I remember my history correctly).

Frank Powell aged eighteen or nineteen is also a character in the story. He had been studying medicine but on one of his vacations from medical school, went West to spend his vacation with his friend Cody then riding a Pony Express route. Cody had formed the acquaintance of a very beautiful young girl, motherless, but cared for and loved as a daughter by an old trader.

A brotherly and sisterly love grew up between the two young people. They learned to call each other "Brother Will" and "Little Sister."

Early in the tale young Cody discovers the fact that the young girl is being advertised for as the heiress to a huge English estate and title. In fact a co-heir, a young Englishman, is already on his way West to find the young lady and take her back to England.

The facts about the girl and her huge heritage is also discovered by the leader of a band of outlaws, and they kidnap her to hold for ransom. The leader falls in love with her but after a long chase she is finally rescued by Cody, Powell and a few of their friends. A few days later while Cody is on his run she is again kidnapped by the same band.

After a long bloody trail Cody, this time aided by soldiers, again rescues her. She meets and falls in love with the young Englishman who marries her and takes her and her foster father back to England. The story ends with Cody resuming his Pony Express duties and Powell going back East to finish his course in medicine.

No collector of Beadles Dime Library especially Buntline items should be without this story. A gem of a tale shedding many side-lights on Cody's early career.

NOVELNUT NONSENSE

BROTHER DEAR: Had your silence not indicated that you desired more out of the same bottle, our COLYUM'S glad noise would have ceased. Your look of pained astonishment over what our intelligence department has dug up about you, comes too late. Therefore Brethern, "We'll roll our tails and roll 'em high. Ere we with the angels fly." And run with the pack.

FROM A Schenectady despatch, we are informed that Mary Ann Gash has left town. Coincidentally, Brother Frye advises that he'll be dad-fetched if he is going to pay out two-bits to have his hair cut any more. We are with you, Bob, Show that flirt up.

WE UNDERSTAND that our wealthy member, Brother Bragin, paid so large an income-tax that the battleship it bought will be named the SEABEE. On his refusal to redistribute his novel-wealth among our members, we confidently approached other members with this worthy proposal. Their reactions follows: Bro. French; made funny noises and commenced to choke. * Bro. Moran: reached for his scatter-gun. * Br. Maroske; Gave us an expressionless, fishy stare. * Bro. Burns: Swallowed his eating tobacco. * Bro. McIntyre: Evasively related to us incidents of his departed Uncle Jethro. * Bro. Couch: Commenced running in a circle. * Bro. Jonas: Fainted. * Bro. Caldwell: Gave vent to a screeching string of psalms. * Bro. Nathan; Remarked, "What a business." * Bro. Austin; sounded like Chinese talk which we couldn't translate. * Bro. Guinon: Has burned up his collection. * Bro. Johannsen: "I shall take it under advisement." * Bro. Miller: "Will write." * The results therefore, seem negative.

TWO GENTLEMEN whose application for membership is sponsored by our Dean, appeared at our President's office: "My name, Mr. Cummings, is Schmidt, spelled with a "dt." "Und mein, Mr. Cuminks, iss Hugo, und dey is schelp mit a "u." Promising material here.

APPLICATION OF Joe Stalin, Moscow, sponsored by Bro. Hurd, rejected. Reason: Joe is a sock-eyed, woolly, walrus-whiskered, long-haired, mukluk-wearing potlatcher, with baleful designs on our members.

WHEN FIFTY-TWO members of our Club contributed towards the purchase of a hair-brush as a birthday-token to Bro. Westbrook, they were unaware that Charlie's hair had disappeared when he rubbed potash into the scalp to exterminate dandruff, mostly. Therefore will he be so good as to return the hairbrush? Our president, Bro. Cummings, needs it.

WE REPORT a cheery visit at headquarters by Bro. Chase, who is enjoying a week's lay-off during repairs on the slaughter-house.

AN APOLOGY: In accordance with our by-laws, we forwarded two copiers to be stuck on Brother Skinner's eyes when mistakenly advised that our talented Brother had gone where

the whangdoodle morneth for her first born, and where the woodbine twineth. Blithe spirit of Pawtucket, we apologize. Hail to thee! Please return the two cents.

OUR IMPRESSIONS of our Club's private Gandhi-clout rehearsal: Assorted shoes, boots, and socks. Crackling and creaking of hock-joints. Bow-legs, knock-knees, and a blinding glint of safty-pins. Frankly, we are NOT Appollos, "but neither was Abraham Lincoln" says Bro. Miller.

BRIEF MENTION. Br. Couch's flaming beard is now 4-ft. 7-in. long. In such a setting, our Brother shines like a smoke-stack afire. His collection of whisky labels is the talk of California.

ONE FINE THING about our Brethren and friends is that we can treat them worse than anybody else, for if we told the truth about you it would be a lie. Conversely, if we lied about you, it might be the truth, and we are agin' lies. We will appreciate suggestions sent to headquarters. While "there is still some corn in Egypt" it may be getting mildewed in your estimation. HELP! HALP! HALLUP!

OUR GREAT lyric artist, Bro. Austin, has enriched the world of music with two new gems of song, namely, "PAPA'S SHORTS ARE SISTER'S NOW", and also with what is by far his sweetest composition, "CALL ME WHEN THE HASH IS READY." We cannot refrain from here setting down the first verse and also the twenty-fifth and final verse:

"Betsy darling, do not wake me, ere the murphies you do peel,
Ere you've chopped the scraps and leavin's, of our yestereven's meal."

"Wake me not to pangful waitings,
do not serve me so again,
But when the hash is hot and ready,
Gentle Spirit, call me then."

Having learned that Uncle Charlie wrote this song for a "tenner," (tenor), our Dean Maroske, a talented tenor, has consented to sing it at the public dress-parade of our Gandhi Guards. He is practising daily. Thus far there have been five family-removals from his neighborhood.

NEWSY NEWS

By Ye Editor

We here that Fred P. Pitzer, 41 Woodlawn Ave., Jersey City, N. J., has been very sick for the past 3 months. He is lots better now, and we are all

glad that you are improving, Fred.

Victor L. Neighbors, 304 N. State St., Litchfield, Ill., has completed his set of Tip Top Weekly. A set to be proud of, and to think the author of the Frank and Dick Merriwell stories is still alive, it's wonderful, and long may he continue to be with us.

Let's see, there are 8 that has the complete set of the Tip Top Weekly, they are: James E. Knott, J. P. Guinon, Ralph P. Smith, Levi Morgan, Raymond L. Caldwell, Robert McDowell and George Hess, Jr., I don't know of any more just now.

S. B. Condon, So. Penobscot, Maine, says that his ad in the Roundup, from Liverpool, England, offering him some books he has been trying to get for a long time. This may be interesting to the Roundup readers, to know that Roundup covers a lot of the globe. Mr. Condon is still looking for books by Optic, Kellogg, Converse and Castleman, also wants certain numbers of the Western Weekly.

Lots have been said about "Mr Frank Merriwell" lately, in various papers, such as the Milwaukee Journal for March 30th, with picture of Merriwell Series no. 36, Frank Merriwell's Fame, sent in by Clarence K. Howe.

Wm. M. Kreling, 180 San Anselmo Ave., San Francisco, Calif., has been very sick and many of the members that answered his ads and received no reply will now understand why. Soon's he is well enough, he will answer all mail sent him, and make all trades satisfactory. Anyone having any of his wants from any of the 4 ads, please write. He has lot of good stuff to trade for his wants. Bill will be well soon with God's help, I'm sure.

Who knows anything about the Blueskin Series, published by Robert De Witt, 13 Frankford St., New York. Write ye editor.

We hear that Earl Farmer is back in the jug again, also that he is offering good novels to trade which he hasn't got, to fool people. Who knows whether he's in or out of the cooler if out, all members are warned to have nothing to do with him, also Joseph H. Grantham of the sunny shores of California. We hear Joe is offering fine volumes of the Boy of New York vols. 1 2 3 4 6 8 10 etc. This is the bait they use, to get your novels first then you never hear from them again. I know because I've been

bitten badly myself, by both parties. So all new members, please take warning, and have nothing to do with them. They are two bad eggs. Mr Farmer operates from down in North Carolina and Joe H. Gratham from Los Angeles, Calif.

Now as to Beadles Dime Library no 256 "Double Dan, the Dastard, which we had in last issue as beginning with a B instead of D. What a difference those two words make. Dastard means a coward. Bastard might well be a coward, or not, depending on how he stood up to Life. A dastard, on the other hand, is a man who runs away from trouble and is not necessarily a bastard unless he was born that way. There must have been an error in who ever read it the opposite way.

A long article on Nick Carter, by Frisco Bert Couch will appear in the next issue, a fine article it is.

The Reader's Digest for March, 1941 page 53, title, "I Learned About America from Deadwood Dick." Note was sent in by Bros. Jonas, Nathan, Smith and others.

J. D. Hardin, 634 Broad St., Burlington, N. C. has been under the weather this winter, and isn't feeling any to good yet. He wants to know if any one is interested in old copies of the Judge, Life, etc.

Here's a short clipping that appeared in a New Jersey paper, sent in by George French. Frank Merriwell Stages Comeback. Also Mr. Frank Merriwell sent in by Wm. M. Burns from the Rockland Courier Gazette, March 27th has picture of Burt L. Standish (Gibert Patten) himself.

Collection of Blood-Curdling "Dime Novels," of Another Generation Proves Attractive Hobby for Alliance Man. This is the heading on one of the pages of the "Alliance Review" for March 29, 1941, with a picture of himself and a nice little lot of old timers pinned up on the blinds at the side of his home. They look pretty nice, such as Frank Reade, Liberty Boys,

Beadles Dime Library, Old Sleuth and a raft of others, with a nice write up to go with it. This is Brother H. L. (Buck) Wilson, R. D. 1, Alliance, Ohio.

Claims largest collection of "Dime Novels" in Maine. C. B. Hamilton, Norway, Maine, Bro. No. 31, has a picture of himself among stacks of the old times, holding a copy of a Tip Top in his hand with a little display on the side, such as N. Y. Detective, Pluck & Luck, Diamond Dick, Beadles Pocket Novels, etc. The Reporter made a mistake and called him Albert instead of Charles B. Hamilton.

Have lots of books for sale. Send for want list. Ada Mae Hoffrek, 87 W. Newell Ave., Rutherford, N. J.

WANTED

Beadles Frontier Series

Nos. 58 73 86 92.

Deadwood Dick Library #1-30.

Can use all you have of the above, and will pay 15c each for them, must be in good condition.

RALPH F. CUMMINGS

Fisherville, Mass.

Send for my Seven Page List of Novels I have to Swap.

Thousands of Dime Novels, Nickel Novels and Story Papers.

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Lady Gray's Pride or the Miser's Treasure

by Mrs. Alex McVeigh Miller, also Wild and Wilful to the Bitter End, author unknown.

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THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN SERIES

"Frank Among the Rancheros,"

by Harry Castleman
Ex-Library Copy, Bds.
Frontispiece. (1868) \$2.00

AUSTIN S. HOGAN
Box 471, Fonda, N. Y.

IN MEMORIAM

TO
WILLIAM JAMES BENNERS
WHO DIED
JUST A YEAR AGO THIS MONTH
April 3, 1940 — Age 76 Years

Chas. H. Austin

153 Main Street
EAST ROCKAWAY

NEW YORK

Old Time Dime Novels Colored Covers Police Gazettes Western Books Bound Volumes

ETC. ETC.

ALL REPLYs ANSWERED

WANTED

To Buy, or to exchange for others which I have — (list furnished upon request) — mostly published by F. M. Lupton, at low prices. If you have not the paper-backed novels in the following list, send me a list of novels by these authors which you have.

The Chimney Corner Series were published by Lupton at 25 cents each.

By Charlotte M. Braeme: Set in Diamonds; Romance of a Black Veil; A Golden Heart; Lord Lynne's Choice. These are also novels sold by Street & Smith.

Arm Chair Library novels by Lupton sold for 10 cents each. By Louisa M. Alcott: Moods; Flower Fables.

Horatio Alger: Abner Holden's Bound Boy.

Leisure Hour Library novels by Lupton sold for 5 cents each.

Emerson Bennett: Pioneer's Daughter; Circumstantial Evidence; Kidnapped Heiress.

Frances Hodgson Burnett: Tragedy of a Quiet Life, Pretty Polly Pemberton. Louisa M. Alcott: Mysterious Key.

May Agnes Fleming: Hinton Hall; Rose of Earnstein.

Anna Katharine Green: Two Men and a Question; Old Stone House; The Doctor, His Wife, and the Clock.

Mary Hartwell: Woman in Armor.

Mary R. P. Hatch; any novel by any publisher.

William C. Hudson: Brass Bound Box.

Etta W. Pierce: House on the Island; A Mad Passion.

Effie Adelaide Rowlands: Any novel, except in Leisure Hour Library.

E. D. E. N. Southworth: Fatal Secret; Broken Engagement; Wife's Victory; Sybil Brotherton.

Georgie Sheldon: Betsy's Transformation, in Street & Smith series.

HERMAN PITCHER

423 So. Marion St.,

Lake City, Florida

THE LAST DAYS OF BILLY THE KID

By J. P. Guinon

(The following is written from notes taken nineteen years ago in New Mexico, the occurrences described herein having been set down exactly as related to the writer by Mr. John W. Poe, at that time the only surviving member of the little posse of three courageous and determined men who had ridden into Old Fort Sumner, one July evening forty-one years previously, and there ended the career of the Southwest's most feared and notorious outlaw, William Bonney, alias Billy the Kid.)

A covered wagon stopped in front of the courthouse in Lincoln, New Mexico, on a day in the spring of 1881. From it emerged three persons, two of whom carried weapons and were obviously guarding the third, whose wrists were encircled by handcuffs connected by a few inches of steel chain, and whose ankles were shackled to each other by a somewhat longer chain, also of steel.

The two guards were United States Marshall Bob Ollinger and Deputy Sheriff Dave Wood. Their prisoner was named William Bonney, and sometimes answered to the name of William Antrim, but was much better known throughout the region as Billy the Kid.

As the two officers escorted the Kid, who was compelled to hobble along slowly and awkwardly in his hampering bonds, out of the hot dust of the street into the cool interior of the large, square-built, two-story courthouse, the physical contrast between the representatives of the law and the man in their custody seemed almost ludicrous. With one of his burley guardians on either side, Billy looked like a "kid" indeed, the top of his head barely reaching the level of their shoulders, and his slightly-built body resembling that of some slender schoolboy.

But if the Kid's weight and height seemed insignificant by comparison with the dimensions of Ollinger and Wood, he was head and shoulders above them in nerve, quickness of mind and body, and skill with knife and revolver. At the moment when the two officers herded Billy into the building, his record showed more than a score of men dead because of the speed of his small, almost womanish hands with a gun, and his readiness to kill without hesitation of mercy any person who angered or opposed him. His trail for the murder of Sheriff Brady at Lincoln three years previously had just been concluded at Mesilla, a hundred miles to the Southwest, and the Kid had there been sen-

tenced by Judge Bristol to be hanged on May 13th in the town where the crime had been committed. Immediately after the trial Ollinger and Wood had been instructed to deliver the youthful killer to Sheriff Pat Garrett of Lincoln County for execution.

Quite a little crowd had materialized to see the Southwest's most ruthless gunman taken into the courthouse by the two officers from Mesilla, and in this crowd were many who knew Billy personally, some as friends, who would have been glad to do him a favor, and others as enemies, equally ready to inflict upon him the merciless death he had so often meted out to others. The Kid nonchalantly recognized them all, and nodded and smile cheerfully at friend and foe alike as he hobbled between his guards into the big adobe structure that was to be his prison until the date arrived for his execution.

Lincoln at the time had progressed far enough in its recognition of the law to have erected a jail, but, although it was, as jails went in those days, not a bad effort, nevertheless there was no denying the fact that adobe was the predominating material in its construction, and it was hardly reasonable to think of it as substantial enough to restrain the nifty and resourceful Kid, who had on former occasions demonstrated his ability to depart from its confines whenever it pleased him to do so. After careful consideration of this important angle of the problem of how to be certain of Billy's presence at his own hanging, the sheriff had decided to keep him in a large room on the second floor of the courthouse, ironed at wrist and ankle and guarded night and day, until the hour less than three weeks distant when the law's responsibilities in the matter and the Kid's activities in this life would be ended simultaneously at the end of a rope.

The courthouse itself had a history hardly less interesting than Billy's, and at this point it may be interest-

ing to mention a few of the most important features of that history. A huge, almost square two-story affair of adobe, the building had been constructed shortly after the Civil War by a man named Murphy, to serve as a combined store and living quarters for himself and his family. "The Big Store" as it became known from Denver to El Paso, serviced a territory of more than two hundred square miles, and Murphy, through his connection with it, became a rich and politically powerful man.

In that day and time, however, such a personage as Murphy could not attain such consequence without creating enemies, and the wealthy and arrogant proprietor of the "Big Store" accumulated a large number of them in the course of his climb to fame and fortune. These became more or less well organized in their opposition to Murphy and his ambitions, and there gradually developed a great deal of ill-feeling between this faction and the Murphy crowd, which was climaxed in 1878 by open hostilities between the two contingents. Sheriff Brady was aligned with Murphy, while included in the forces opposed to him was Billy the Kid. During the next two years the town of Lincoln and the surrounding territory witnessed killings on both sides, and one of the first to die was Sheriff Brady, ambushed and riddled with bullets on Lincoln's one and only street by the Kid and several companions.

The feud, which became known from coast to coast as "The Lincoln County War," became a national scandal in 1880 when the two factions clashed in a pitched battle in the town of Lincoln itself. The fight lasted several days and many were killed on both sides, until intervention by United States troops halted the conflict. During the affair the "Big Store" was the headquarters of the Murphy forces, and the building was peppered almost continually by rifle and pistol bullets fired from the weapons of the opposition, which was lead by a man named McSween. Hundreds of these missiles remain to this day buried in the thick adobe walls of the structure.

Murphy's participation in the Lincoln County War ruined him financially, and when mortgages on his various properties were foreclosed the "Big Store" passed into the possession of others, eventually becoming the Lincoln County Courthouse. Because

of its size it was admirably suited for this purpose. Shortly before the Kid's conviction for the murder of Brady, the large upper floor had been converted into a courtroom, although the only entrance to a second story at that time was from the rear of the building up a narrow flight of stairs, which changed direction halfway between the floors at a small landing. In later years this inconvenient method of reaching the courtroom from the street was greatly improved upon by the construction of a stairway up the front of the building on the outside, to a balcony or small porch on the level of the second floor, from which a door, converted from what had once been a window, opened into the courtroom. At the time Billy was confined there, however, the front stairway had not been built, although the balcony itself was in existence.

Up the narrow, crooked rear stairway that has just been described the Kid, with a twelve-inch steel chain connecting his ankles, slowly and with great difficulty managed to climb to the second floor, where the stairway ended in a hall with rooms opening on it from one side and the courtroom itself from the other. Down this hall shuffled the young outlaw, watched constantly by his guards, and so into the courtroom, where, in a corner far removed from the door by which he had entered, had been hastily assembled three cots, the same number of chairs, a small table and other minor furnishings. This corner, from which a window looked down on Lincoln's one street, was to be the Kid's prison for the few remaining days of his life. One of the cots and a chair were for the use of the Kid; the other furnishings were mostly for the use of his jailors, who, armed and vigilant, were expected to maintain a continual watch over their prisoner, day and night, until he mounted the scaffold which Sheriff Pat Garrett was even then preparing to construct for him at the rear of the building.

No chances whatever were to be taken with Billy. It was believed that, guarded in the manner described high on the almost inaccessible second floor of the courthouse, his chances for escape or rescue were infinitely less than if he were to be confined in the little adobe jail. It was because of this same policy of extreme caution that the journey from Mesilla to Lincoln had been made in a covered

wagon instead of on horseback, the guards feeling sure the Kid would have less chance of a successful break for liberty if transported in that manner than if he had a horse between his knees and his ankles released.

The journey had been a long and tiring one, even to those men who were accustomed to arduous travel, and the strain appeared to have been much harder on the officers than the prisoner. Guarding a man like William Bonney, even under the best of conditions, was not a proceeding to be considered lightly. During the long, tedious hours required for the expedition to cover the more than one hundred miles of wild, lonesome country between Mesilla and Lincoln, they had not dared to relax their vigilance for an instant, lest in some manner their slippery charge might contrive to turn the tables on them. The Kid's alert brain and lightning-like speed when going into action had exotricated him from more than a few tight situations and had made his name legendary throughout the entire Southwest. Both Ollinger and Wood were well aware of his ability, if given the slightest opportunity, to turn an apparently hopeless situation into triumph for himself. Therefore, to make certain that no such opportunity came to the outlaw during the long trip, they kept their eyes on Billy and their hands constantly near their guns.

But Billy had been a model prisoner. His cheerfulness had gone far toward relieving the monotony as one long, slow mile succeeded another and the seemingly interminable hours crept by. He had joked, laughed and swapped stories with his guards, and in general conducted himself in such a fashion as to arouse no anxiety or suspicion whatever in the minds of Ollinger and Wood. It was noticeable, however, that in his apparent efforts to make the journey more endurable the Kid had received no cooperation from Ollinger. Dave Wood was friendly enough with the captive, but Ollinger, who was known to be something of a bully and badman, seldom spoke during their tiresome pilgrimage except to cast slurs or sneers at the helpless Billy. If it was his intention to provoke the Kid into anger, however, he failed completely, as never by word or sign had the youth shown any resentment. All the obvious attempts of the big guard to ruffle the prisoner's feelings had been

turned off good-naturedly by the latter, which had only seemed to make Bob more persistent and insulting in his heckling.

As a matter of fact, Ollinger had, in the past, often expressed contempt for the Kid and a desire to tangle with him. There were many men in the Southwest whose bravery was unquestioned, but who would have refrained from such statements, considering it quite possible that they might at some time in the future prove unhealthy to the person who had made them. This possibility had not deterred Ollinger, apparently. He had been a member of the posse, headed by Sheriff Pat Garrett, that had besieged and captured the Kid and several companions at Stinking Springs a few months before, and on several occasions since, while the outlaw was awaiting trial, had taunted and sneered at Billy in public and private.

The journey over and the prisoner safely installed in the Lincoln County Courthouse, Deputy Sheriff Dave Woods returned to his station at Mesilla, his place as guard being taken over by a man named J. W. Bell, who, with Bob Ollinger, took turns watching the Kid during the day and sleeping in the same room with the young desperado at night. Billy was apparently well pleased with his quarters and remained consistently cheerful and pleasant to both his jailors. He spent most of his daylight hours seated by the barred window, rolling and smoking cigarettes and observing the comings and goings of the townspeople in the street below. Most of these passersby he knew personally, some as friends, others as enemies, and he had a wave of the hand and a smile or pleasant salutation for friend and enemy alike who glanced in passing at the Kid in his window.

Bob Ollinger continued to heckle the Kid at every opportunity, but Billy remained cheerful and apparently unperturbed through it all. He knew that Ollinger would welcome an excuse, no matter how slight, to kill him, and he did not propose to furnish that excuse. The burly officer, patting and fondling a shotgun, would sit watching his prisoner for long minutes at a time with a peculiar expression on his face, but if he hoped thus to shake the Kid's nerve, he evidently failed. Billy would calmly ignore such demonstrations, roll and smoke cigarettes, and lazily gaze down into the street.

"What's the matter with yuh, Kid?" Bob would sneed. "Are yuh going to sit here like a tame rabbit until Pat comes for yuh with the rope? Where's all that nerve yuh're supposed to have? Why don't yuh make a break sometime? Ain't turnin' yella, are yuh, Kid?"

"Well, now, I'll tell yuh, Bob," the outlaw would answer pleasantly, "I'm mighty comfortable here. The meals are good and come regular, and yuh and Bell are fine company. I'm havin' a real rest, Bob, and I'm enjoyin' it all first-rate. I'd hate to run off and leave yuh."

"Yuh'll have a damned good long rest after Pat drops yuh through the trap, Kid, but yuh won't need meals or company," was Ollinger's retort, and the captive would shake his head with a whimsical smile and allow that it sure looked that way.

The other guard, Bell, became quite friendly with Billy. They swapped stories, played cards together at the little table with the Kid's movements sadly hampered by his manacles, and Bell, who was an inveterate reader of newspapers, would frequently call the Kid's attention to interesting items appearing in them. Ollinger did not like this display of good feeling between the other guard and the outlaw and on one occasion protested strongly against it, but without effect.

With the date of Billy's execution a little more than two weeks distant, Sheriff Pat Garrett found it necessary to go to White Oaks, about twenty-five miles to the west through the Capitan Mountains, to secure the heavy timbers needed to construct the Kid's gallows, and to keep an appointment with John W. Poe, one of his deputies, who had been in Arizona, near Tombstone, tracing stolen cattle. Poe, a detective in the employ of the Canadian River Cattle Association had come into New Mexico from the Panhandle country a month previously, on the trail of cattle stolen by the Kid and his band of outlaws some time before, and had been deputized by Garrett to work with the sheriff in rounding up the remaining members of Billy's gang of criminals. Before leaving for White Oaks, Garrett climbed the stairs to the courtroom, where he found Bell and Ollinger relieving to some extent the tedium of their continual watch over the outlaw by playing cards, while the Kid, in his accustomed place at the window

was dividing his attention between the game and the passers-by, occasionally commenting on one or the other. The greater part of the rather desultory conversation was, as usual between Bell and Billy. The Kid seldom addressed Ollinger, but when he did so, or when replying to such remarks as Bob directed at him, Billy's tone and language were invariably courteous and cheerful, in marked contrast to that of Bob, whose talk in which the young outlaw was included plainly showed an apparent contempt for the prisoner. Both Bell and Bob wore their revolvers; Ollinger's favorite weapon, the shotgun, reposing at the moment in a closet in one corner of the room.

"Hello, Kid" was Garrett's greeting to the man he expected shortly to hang.

"How are yuh, Pat?" was Billy's friendly reply.

"Hope yuh're entirely comfortable, Billy," said the sheriff. "Anything I can do for yuh, let me know."

"Well, Pat," said Billy, with his boyish and engaging smile, "How about lending me yore horse for a little ride down the vally. Yoh might take off these bracelets, too, and lend me yohr guns until I get back."

"Let him have 'em, Pat!" snapped Ollinger. "He won't go far."

Both Bell and the Kid grinned broadly, but there was no smile on the face of Ollinger, whose hatred for his helpless prisoner seemed to grow more apparent each day.

"I'm riding over to White Oaks today, boys," said Garrett, speaking to the two guards, and delicately refraining from stating the reason for the trip. "Take good care of the Kid while I'm gone. I ought to be back in the morning."

"Oh, the Kid's safe enough, Pat," said Bell, easily. "He's been a good boy, and won't give us no trouble, will yuh, Kid?"

"Sure not, Bell" declared Billy, awkwardly producing "the makin's" and starting to construct a cigarette with his manacled hands, meanwhile smiling at Garrett. "Don't yuh worry one mite, Pat."

Garrett looked sharply at the Kid and then at Bell and Ollinger. His years among the quick tempers and trippers of the Southwest of that day had quickened his perceptions, and he seemed to feel a sudden premonition of danger. He glanced again at the

Kid, then suddenly stepped over to him, stooped down and closely examined the short steel chain and bands of the same material attached to the prisoner's ankles. Link by link he went over the twelve-inch fetter, the Kid obligingly stretching out his legs to facilitate the examination, meanwhile continuing his efforts, rendered clumsy by his confined wrists, to roll his cigarette.

Then Garrett straightened and gazed keenly at the cuffs on the Kid's wrists and the bare six inches of chain connecting them. He watched the outlaw's hands, slow but steady, as they manipulated the paper and tobacco, and watched them as the Kid raised the little roll to his lips and licked the loose edge of the paper before completing the operation with a twist of his fingers that sealed both ends of the smoke. He looked at Billy's guileless face and deep into his eyes, which gazed back at the sheriff frankly and without apparent concern. Garrett's expression was serious, almost suspicious. That of Billy was innocently inquiring. The Kid calmly placed one end of his cigarette between his lips.

"Got a match, Pat?" he asked, easily.

Garrett picked up a match from the window sill where several of them lay within easy reach of the nonchalant young outlaw. He dragged it along the sill and held the resulting flame to Billy's cigarette, still watching the Kid's face as the fire took hold and the smoker drew a deep inhalation.

"Thanks, Pat," said the Kid.

Garrett turned away and stepped back toward the center of the room, looked about him, noticing the position of the furniture, the location of the windows, the little room or closet in which were kept shotguns, revolvers and ammunition for the use of guards. He was uneasy, but could see no reason for his disquiet. The prisoner was heavily and securely shackled, and watched day and night by armed men, one of whom, at least, hated him to an extent that might be counted on to increase the efficiency of his vigil. To escape, the Kid must overcome or avoid both Bell and Ollinger, leave the building through the second-story window or down the narrow stairs at the rear, and even then, without weapons or a horse and barely able to hobble about in his shackles, he would be easy to recapture. There was the possibility,

of course, that an attempt might be made to rescue the Kid by some of his friends. He had many in the town. But he also had a great number of enemies there, and no move toward rescue by the former would go unchallenged by the latter.

But Garrett knew the Kid; knew his nerve and resourcefulness. He had chummed with him in years gone by. Before the appointment as sheriff of Lincoln County had come to him and before the Kid had become a desperado and cattle rustler with a score of killings charged against him, the two men had worked as cowhands with the same outfit and had been close friends. Since then he had hunted, fought with and captured Billy more than once. He knew it was not at all like the Kid to sit calmly gazing through a window, smoking cigarettes and chatting amiably with his guards, with the day of his execution less than two weeks in the future. It was not reasonable to suppose that the cleverest and most courageous outlaw the West had ever known would go quietly and unresisting to his death on the gallows without at least one attempt, no matter how forlorn or unlikely of success, to escape such an ignominious end.

But what could the Kid do? In spite of his feeling of uneasiness, Garrett was forced to admit that the prisoner, guarded as he was, had not one chance in a thousand of outwitting the law and escaping the fate decreed for him. However, he was quite well aware that if such a chance existed, Billy would discover it and exploit it with all his daring, intelligence and determination, knowing he had nothing to lose by the attempt.

"You and Bell" Garrett addressed Ollinger, "are to keep yore eyes on Billy every minute until I get back. Keep yore guns handy and use them at the first suspicious move. It ain't in reason for the Kid to sit here like he's been doin', just waiting to be hung, without tryin' something, and he'll be trying it soon. Don't take any chances whatever!"

Ollinger got to his feet and went to the closet where the county's little arsenal was kept. He came back carrying his pet shotgun and reseated himself, patting the stock of the weapon and glaring at the still smiling Kid as he said to Garrett:

"There are eighteen buckshot in this

gun, and they'll be in the Kid's carcass if he so much as looks like starting anything. I'd enjoy putting them there, too," he went on savagely, "and yuh know it, don't yuh, Kid?"

"It would be a joke on you, Bob," said Billy softly, "if somehow they happened to land in you, instead."

Ollinger, surprised and infuriated at the Kid's provoking language and manner, which, entirely contrary to the prisoner's usual courteous attitude toward the big guard, was as unexpected as it was daring, snarled an obscene reply as he half started to his feet, swinging the shotgun toward the Kid. In his rage he might have fired at Billy had Bell not hastily stepped between the two men. Garrett, too, made a move as if to interfere, and spoke sharply to Ollinger, warning him sternly to control himself.

The sheriff was not entirely sorry over the evident ill-feeling that existed between the guard and his prisoner, knowing that in such a situation there would be no lack of vigilance on the part of Ollinger, and plenty of reason for hesitancy on the Kid's part about making any moves toward escape while Bob was present. He almost wished that Bell, too, felt somewhat antagonistic toward the captive, but, knowing that no enmity whatever existed between the two men, he realized that the efficiency of Bell's watchfulness must arise from his sense of duty. Before leaving, Garrett took Bell aside and talked seriously with him, trying to impress him with the necessity of being constantly on the alert where the Kid was concerned.

"Don't worry, Pat." Bell promised him. "I'll be careful, and yuh'll find the Kid right here when yuh get back. I'll have to watch Bob, too," he added as an afterthought. "He'll kill the Kid shore if Billy even wiggles a finger, after that smart crack the fool Kid made awhile ago."

Somewhat reassured, but not entirely rid of his presentiment of impending trouble, Garrett, before leaving town, hunted up Geiss, the regular jailer, and stationed him on the landing halfway up the stairs to the second floor of the building. He made sure that Geiss was armed and alive to the necessity of maintaining a guard over the stairway at all times when not engaged with other prisoners in the little jail. Then he departed

for White Oaks, but his feeling of uneasiness rode with him, in spite of the fact that there was now apparently no earthly way for Billy the Kid to avoid his share in the program that had been arranged to take place two weeks hence for the benefit of law and order in Lincoln County.

It was mid-morning when the sheriff left Lincoln, and Ollinger and Bell, their card game forgotten, did little after his departure except keep their attention centered on the apparently indifferent Billy. There was little conversation. The sheriff's visit, and his evident belief that a strong possibility existed that the Kid would attempt to cheat the law, had created a feeling of tension that persisted in spite of a few rather half-hearted joking remarks by Bell and the usual smiling demeanor exhibited by the outlaw.

Ollinger had practically nothing to say. He still held the shotgun across his knees and brooded morosely over it as he kept his eyes almost constantly on the prisoner, and the expression in those eyes disturbed Bell considerably although their savage regard seemed to cause the Kid no concern.

As a matter of fact, the Kid, without weapons and absolutely helpless, had never in his life been in greater danger, and both he and Bell were well aware of the menace. Bob Ollinger had reached a point in his hatred for Billy where he would welcome an excuse to empty the contents of his shotgun into him. Even if the excuse was a slim one, it would serve to forward the guard's very evident desire to kill the young desperado. There was nothing the matter with Billy's mental processes, and he knew that the slightest incautious move or word on his part would be promptly seized upon by Ollinger as a reason for shooting his captive down. Therefore the Kid sat almost without movement, gazing sleepily into the street below and giving the murderous guard no possible cause for hostile action against him.

At noon Ollinger rose, placed his shotgun against the wall, and said to Bell:

"I'll go down, get something to eat, and then come back so you can go. Keep your eye on that —!"

If Billy heard the epithet he gave no sign. He sat, unmoving and apparently dozing, as Ollinger passed

through the doorway, along the hall to the rear of the building and down the stairs. On the landing Boo was somewhat surprised to find Geiss, who sat in a chair tilted back against the wall with a revolver in his lap. To Ollinger's inquiry as to what he was doing there, the jailer told of Garrett's instructions in the matter, whereupon Ollinger profanely assured him that if Billy the Kid should attempt to escape while he (Ollinger) was guarding him, the outlaw would never live to reach the point where Geiss was stationed.

Geiss was nervous. He served the county as a sort of turnkey and general handy man in and around the little adobe jail, located in the rear of the courthouse, but he was definitely not of the right caliber to guard such a character as Billy the Kid. The very thought of the outlaw charging down those stairs he was guarding made the jailor quake in his boots, although he tried manfully to conceal his trepidation from Ollinger.

Bob left Geiss and walked around the courthouse to the front, then across and down the street to a restaurant, while back in the building Bell, looking decidedly worried, sat in a chair a few feet from his prisoner, who was softly whistling a tune as he rolled a cigarette, his face placid and his movements unhurried. But the same thought was in the minds of both men. Ollinger would soon return and send Bell out to eat and left alone with Billy, would kill him and justify the act by a claim of self defense or an effort on the part of the Kid to escape. There would be no witnesses and no one would be inclined to question Ollinger's statement, and few would blame him for ridding the Southwest of such a notorious thief and killer even if doubting the entire truth of the guard's excuse for the shooting.

Now Bell was, in spite of his occupation, a rather kindly man, and he pitied the unfortunate Kid, whose cheerfulness and good nature during his confinement had to a considerable extent blinded the guard to the young outlaw's true nature and reputation, and caused him to forget or overlook Billy's record of murders and robberies. He hated to think of Ollinger shooting the helpless Kid down in cold blood, and wondered if in some manner it could be presented. Perhaps,

if he told Ollinger he was not hungry and refused to leave the room to get his dinner, it might save the Kid's life. He felt sure the vindictive guard would not murder a handcuffed prisoner in the presence of a witness.

Still pondering on the situation, he mechanically picked up a newspaper from the floor and from force of habit began glancing through its pages. It has been remarked how Bell frequently whiled away the long, tedious hours while on guard, poring over such reading matter as he could pick up in the town.

The keen eyes and nimble brain of Billy the Kid had not failed to note this characteristic of Bell's, and a plan had formed in his agile mind by which he hoped to benefit from it. And now the Kid knew the time had arrived to put the plan into execution.

For weeks he had worn the manacles about his wrists. They had been designed for use on a more heavily built man than Billy, whose wrists and hands were small, almost feminine. This the Kid had been quick to notice, and he soon found that he could, by manipulating his hands, very nearly slip them through the encircling steel.

Almost, but not quite! So the Kid for many days had been starving himself and unobtrusively working to free his thinning hands. The stratagem had finally succeeded! A few days before, he had experienced the thrill of freeing one hand, then the other. But, with consummate cunning, he had immediately returned them to their shackles until such time as their freedom would be needed to aid him in escaping. Since then, he had become adept at slipping the handcuffs on and off, meanwhile concealing the maneuver from the eyes of his guards. His easy, obliging manner and apparent calm acceptance of the fate in store for him had fooled even the saturnine Ollinger to an extent that surveillance had become rather perfunctory and consisted principally in keeping an unsuspicious eye on the prisoner from a position generally many yards away. Even the keen-eyed Garrett had failed to observe, as the Kid had busied himself with his cigarette, that the gyves about the killer's wrists did not fit too closely.

Now, as Bell became absorbed in his newspaper, his face half hidden behind it, the Kid silently drew his feet beneath him, slipped the handcuffs

from his wrists, and with a lightning-like movement hurled himself across the short intervening space upon the unsuspecting guard. At the same time he smashed the handcuffs and chain, together with the newspaper, down upon Bell's head.

Dazed by the attack and confused for an instant by the fluttering newspaper, Bell was slow to react to the emergency. The hesitation was quite enough for Billy, whose speed of hand was proverbial even in a country and a time when such speed was sought for and practiced by men whose lives frequently depended upon the quickness with which they could produce and fire a revolver, and whose living was often gained through their ability to make a card appear or disappear under the very eyes of their opponents at poker or other games of chance. The Kid's swift fingers darted to the guard's holster, and Bell, recovering at last from his befuddlement, found himself looking into the muzzle of his own weapon. The entire incident had not consumed more than three seconds of time.

"Easy, Bell!" snapped the Kid in a low voice. "I don't intend to hurt yuh if yuh don't cut up, but yuh have got to do as I say and do it quick, or I'll kill yuh!"

Billy the Kid was no longer the cheerful, amiable boy whose sunny smile and obliging disposition had caused Bell to forget the youth's reputation as a cold-blooded murderer and outlaw. The disarming grin and soft voice had disappeared, and the gasping guard found himself gazing into the blazing eyes and tense face of a killer, made doubly dangerous by the desperate position in which he was placed and the necessity for instant and decisive action if he was to extricate himself from it. The thousandth chance had come to Billy; he had seized it with characteristic speed and boldness, and like the born gambler he was he would now play it for all it was worth. The life of Bell or anyone else attempted to interfere with his movements from now on would be snuffed out by the Kid without hesitation or mercy.

"Yuh haven't a chance, Kid ——" Bell began, but stopped quickly at the murderous expression that had flashed across the boy's chalk-white face. "What do yuh want me to do?" he said hurriedly.

"Get up and walk out of here a couple of feet in front of me." Billy told him. "Don't try anything, Bell! I'll kill yuh sure if yuh do!"

"Where are we going?" asked Bell. "Downstairs first, to get somethin, to break this damned chain between my feet," the Kid's low voice snapped. The ankle bands could be unlocked, but Billy knew the only key to them was in Pat Garrett's possession.

Bell rose and started across the room toward the door into the hall, with his own gun a foot from his back, held in the hand of the lad who, a short minute previously, had been sitting, apparently a helpless captive, gazing sleepily through a window at the shadows thrown by the noonday sun in the street below. The guard was dazed by the speed with which the tables had been turned and the frightening possibilities of his present humiliating and desperate situation. But he was no coward, and he determined to make some effort to prevent Billy's escape, even though he himself should be severely wounded or killed in the endeavor. His mind darted at one possibility after another, and as the two men passed through the door and turned toward the head of the stairs at the end of the hall, a plan occurred to him that seemed to promise some hope of success.

It has been described how the narrow stairway descended some ten or twelve steps to the landing mentioned before in this account. This stairway was entirely enclosed. At the landing it reversed direction on the other side of the wall, continuing to the ground floor. It occurred to Bell that he might, when he reached the head of the stairway, gain the landing in a single quick leap downward and then, by flinging himself around the turn and down the remaining steps, leave Billy hopelessly behind. Shackled as he was, the outlaw would have no chance of overtaking him, and once away from the menace of the gun in Billy's hand, he could get help to hold the Kid in the building until some plan could be devised to recapture him.

As the scheme formed almost instantly in Bell's mind, the desperate guard and his no less desperate prisoner of a few moments before started down the hall. Unconsciously Bell began to move faster, and was immediately warned by Billy in a savage undertone to slow down, Thus

they came to the head of the stairway with Bell less than three feet in advance of the shuffling, hobbled outlaw.

Putting all the speed he could muster into the action, Bell hurled himself down the short flight. As he did so he caught a glimpse of the staring, terrified face of the astonished Geiss looking up at him from the landing below, where the timid jailor still sat in his chair leaning back against the wall, almost completely blocking the turn.

The alarmed countenance of Geiss was the last thing Bell was ever to see. Before his leap had terminated, while his figure was still in the air, the Kid, quickest man on the trigger of a revolver and the best marksman with that weapon in the Southwest, had shot him through the heart from behind. The heavy slug tore through Bell and thudded into the adobe wall at the end of the flight, striking beside Geiss' chair, while the unfortunate man's body crashed down on the last step and rebounded onto Geiss, knocking him from his seat and down the remaining steps to the lower floor. The chair, with the kicking figure of Bell entangled in it, also rolled down to the foot of the second flight.

Geiss picked himself up, uttering wild yells of fear, and ran limping around the courthouse to the street. Staggering across the thoroughfare, he began shouting Ollinger's name. He met the guard on the opposite sidewalk. Bob had heard the shot as he was returning from the restaurant and had immediately broken into a run toward the courthouse.

"Bell has shot the Kid!" gasped the rattled jailer, in his excitement getting the true facts reversed. This mistake on his part undoubtedly had much to do with what followed. Ollinger, believing Geiss' statement, started across the street at a walk, something he would hardly have been foolish enough to do had he known the kid was alive and armed. As he reached the center of the dusty road, he glanced up at the window through which Billy the Kid had spent long hours gaing down during the days of his imprisonment under Ollinger's guard.

The spectators attracted by the excitement saw Bob stop in his tracks and stand staring upward. Following his example, they saw Billy again looking down from his window. He was smiling genially at the startled

guard, and against his left shoulder was the stock of Ollinger's own shotgun. The double barrels of the weapon were pointed at Bob, the old-fashioned hammers were drawn back, and the Kid's fingers were on the triggers.

"Hello, Bob!" said the smiling Kid. In the dead hush that had fallen his soft voice was heard distinctly by those who had arrived on the scene and were watching the drama.

Ollinger had no chance to reply. The gun crashed, and the man in the center of the street whirled sideways and down into the dirt of the roadway, mortally wounded, his blood gushing from a gaping hole in his breast and darkening the white dust in which he lay squirming.

The Kid disappeared immediately from the window and an instant later stepped through another opening out on the balcony above the street, still carrying the shotgun. Hobbling to the edge of the platform, he again aimed the weapon at the twisting, gasping figure of Ollinger. Again the gun roared. Ollinger's body jerked sharply as the buckshot tore into it, and then was still.

Billy stood on the balcony and yelled curses at the dead guard below him, finally breaking the shotgun on the railing before him and hurling the pieces at Bob's lifeless figure. For the moment he seemed to have gone completely berserk, shuffling about the little gallery, pausing occasionally to shout obscenity and oaths and shake his fists at the spectators and the corpse of his enemy. The little crowd across the way stood motionless and silent, watching Billy as he hopped and hobbled about on his elevated perch above them. In the crowd was Geiss, and Billy, who knew him well, suddenly stopped and pointed at the jailor.

"Geiss," he snapped, "get me a file and throw it up here! Get it quick! Hurry up!" he yelled furiously, as the man still stood staring at him. "Move, yuh fool, or I'll kill yuh as shore as I'm alive!"

The jailor hesitated no longer. He did not doubt that the Kid would find a way to kill him unless his orders were obeyed, and he hurried away, soon returning with the needed tool which he tossed up to the outlaw.

"Now, Geiss," ordered the Kid, beginning work on his shackles. "get me one uh them horses I saw just now out in back. One uh them, the pony,

used to be mine; yuh know him! Saddle him and bring him around here!"

Then, as Geiss hastened to obey, Billy calmly sat down on the balcony, in full view of the crowd still watching him from across the street, and worked away at the chains which for so long had hampered the movements of his feet. Having finally succeeded in cutting through the steel, he rose and walked about for a few moments, plainly reveling in the unaccustomed freedom of movement the removal of his hobbles afforded. Then, as Geiss showed up below with the horse, the Kid called down to him to wait, disappeared through the window, and a short time later came around the courthouse to the street. He had evidently stopped at the closet in the courtroom where the arms were stored, as, besides a Winchester rifle, he carried two revolvers and two belts of cartridges.

Completely ignoring the crowd less than thirty feet away, and the body of Ollinger, at which the pony was snorting and shying, Billy took the reins from Geiss and attempted to climb into the saddle. Weighted down with weapons and handicapped by the plunging of the nervous horse, he found the task difficult, and was finally thrown heavily into the dirt. He was up quickly, however, and Geiss having in the meantime caught and returned the horse, the nerry outlaw again tried to mount. This time, with some assistance from the trembling jailor, he succeeded, and, with a yell of triumph, galloped out of Lincoln in a cloud of dust.

The action, or rather, lack of it, on the part of the spectators in thus permitting Billy the Kid to free himself from his bounds and ride unmolested out of town after killing two of its citizens, seems to us in this age of more or less efficient law enforcement almost incomprehensible. It is certain that practically every man who witnessed the coup was armed, and as more than an hour elapsed from the killing of Ollinger to the moment when the Kid rode away, there was plenty of time to organize an attempt to recapture the desperado. Had a reasonably determined effort to accomplish his seizure been carried out it would have not been impossible of success. Or, he could have easily been shot down and killed without risk worth

mentioning, and certainly the crimes he had committed would have justified such action by any law-abiding person.

But it must be remembered that these incidents occurred in a time and in a country where the man who attended strictly to his own business was following an established and favored custom, and in consequence was much more likely to live longer and die more pleasantly than he who went about mixing in the affairs of others. Law and order as we know it today was non-existent. Each man made and enforced his own laws if he was able, and as long as this did not bring him into conflict with the generally accepted customs of the community or the views of some other individual, he was not molested. Disputes and disagreements between men were settled by the ones concerned in their own fashion, sometimes involving gunplay, but if all the participants were believed to have had a "fair and square" show, gun battles resulting in deaths were accepted as a matter of course.

Such law as existed was represented by the sheriff, who was usually appointed by the governor of the state instead of being elected as is done today. His presence and office were as much tolerated as desired, and his principal occupation was chasing cattle rustlers and murders or outlaws of the type of Billy the Kid. Whenever the sheriff felt that he needed assistance in rounding up livestock thieves or capturing some particularly obnoxious desperado, he would deputize men from the community to help in the work. While serving as deputies, these men usually gave their best efforts willingly enough, but when not deputized, they left the matter of law enforcement strictly up to the sheriff.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the misdeeds of Billy the Kid were, in the opinion of the general public with whom the outlaw associated, matters to be settled between the Kid, the particular ones wronged by him, and those who were paid to enforce the law. None of those who witnessed the incidents just described felt called on to take a hand under the circumstances, although, if Garrett had been there and had deputized any of them to assist in apprehending or killing the escaping criminal, such assistance would have been rendered willingly and without hesitation.

Many of those who watched while Billy sat filing away his fetters and witnessed his departure from Lincoln were not friendly to the outlaw and would have been glad to see him captured or killed, but their feelings toward him were tempered by the conviction that it was none of their particular business. Then, too, there were others present who liked or admired the glamorous Kid, and would have resented any attempt to interfere with him in his struggle with those representatives of the law against whom he was pitted, and their resentment would very likely have taken the form of active opposition to anyone not connected with the sheriff's office who might have attempted to restrain or kill Billy in his flight from Lincoln. The Kid had been in the toils of the law and by his own ingenuity and nerve had won free. In doing so he had harmed nobody but representatives of the law who had designs on his life and liberty. Therefore, if the law wanted him again, let the law take him. It was no one else's business. Private citizens not connected with the law and with plenty of other matters to engage their attention did not feel it necessary to meddle with the affair.

So Billy the Kid, with two more killings to his credit or discredit, according to the viewpoint, rode gaily and exultantly, with no attempt being made to prevent him, away from the town where he was to have died at the end of a rope within the coming fortnight. And shortly after he left a messenger departed for White Oaks with important and disturbing news for Sheriff Pat Garrett.

The details of Billy's sensational escape reached the sheriff late on the afternoon of the day on which it occurred, as he was in conference with Poe at White Oaks. After a few appropriate and well-garnished remarks on the subject, Pat instructed Poe to remain in the town and its vicinity to watch for Billy, while he hurried back to Lincoln. Arriving there, he immediately deputized practically all the able-bodied citizens of the town, organized them into posses, and sent them out to comb the country in every direction in a search for the youthful killer. But although these groups of hunters performed their task conscientiously and with all possible efficiency, no trace of the Kid

was found.

After several days the man-hunt slowed down and eventually came to a complete standstill, the posses straggling back into the county seat thoroughly tired out and inclined to the opinion that the Kid, with a full day's start, had prudently headed for Old Mexico where he was well known and had many friends and admirers. Garrett himself concurred in this belief, having no idea that Billy would be so foolhardy as to remain in New Mexico while the border and safety were within easy riding distance and death or recapture were probable north of the line.

Now, Billy's spectacular career had made him something of a demi-god to those individuals, apparently comprising a large proportion of the population of any community, who, not possessing the necessary nerve or skill to perform daring deeds themselves, develop a great admiration for those who do, even if their deeds are outside the law and include robberies and murder. The region in which the Kid had operated for several years, covering practically all of southeastern New Mexico, contained many of these individuals, principally among the Mexican population, and the nervy young outlaw, relying on these friends, many of whom idolized him as a sort of modern Robin Hood, had not left the state, but instead went into hiding in the vicinity of old Fort Sumner, less than a hundred miles from the scene of his coup at Lincoln. While the search for him was ranging all over that part of the state Billy was comfortably and in comparative safety living among his admirers under the very noses of the hunters. If his presence there was known to any who might have been inclined to betray him, fear of reprisals at the hands of the Kid or his well-wishers kept such persons silent on the subject.

After the hunt for him had been abandoned, the Kid, with characteristic boldness, came and went in the vicinity of Fort Sumner more or less openly, and even visited acquaintances near Lincoln and White Oaks. As nearly the entire population of that section of New Mexico, with the possible exception of certain individuals in and about Lincoln, either were friendly to the notorious and famous kid and secretly proud of his exploits in defiance of the law, or feared his

vengeance and the enmity of his associates, and as he made every effort to be seen only by those he could trust, no hint of his presence reached the ears of those who might have been glad or courageous enough to inform on him, either in the interest of justice or for the five hundred dollars reward that had been offered by Governor Lew Wallace for his person, dead or alive.

But with so many aware of his presence, word of it was bound, sooner or later, to reach someone who would pass it on to an agent of the law. So it happened, one day in White Oaks, that Deputy John Poe was approached by a man he had befriended back in the Texas Panhandle country some years previously, and advised that Billy the Kid, far from hiding in fear of his life of the other side of the border away to the south, was instead living serenely and unafraid near Fort Sumner, less than a hundred miles distant.

Poe was incredulous, but his informant told such a straight story and was evidently so sure of the reliability of his news that the deputy was impressed in spite of his firm belief that the Kid had lost no time, after the Lincoln break, in reaching the safety of Old Mexico, and had shown the good judgement since to remain there. Thinking it over, however, he recalled that Billy had never been noted for prudence or caution, and reflected that the outlaw had nerve enough and to spare for such an apparently foolish and daring procedure as to stay nonchalantly within easy reach of the New Mexican authorities while they imagined him to be far away.

Poe was a man of decision, and within an hour after deciding that there was a strong possibility that his tip had been a good one, his horse was carrying him over the twisting, difficult mountain trail to Lincoln. On the way he had plenty of him to consider the matter further, and when he at last arrived at the county seat he was completely convinced that his information had been straight, and that the most famous desperado ever to operate in the Southwest was still in the vicinity of the scenes of his many crimes and escapades.

Garrett, however, when Poe found him in his little office at Lincoln, was extremely skeptical. He had known the Kid for several years, back in the

days when both were cowhands and friends together in the same cattle outfit and neither could have imagined a time to come when one would draw a weapon on the other. He knew the Kid had more nerve, intelligence and initiative than any other man he had ever met, but he could not conceive of Billy, after his recent and most narrow escape from hanging, being so foolish as to risk falling again into the hands of the law, knowing that to do so meant certain death. The Kid had had every incentive to head for Old Mexico and safety, and no possible excuse for remaining in the vicinity of the trap from which he had effected an almost miraculous escape, and which was certain to close upon him again, this time, permanently, if he were incautious enough to remain in the neighborhood.

But Poe was so insistent that Garrett finally yielded and agreed to investigate his deputy's hunch. It was decided to go immediately to Fort Sumner, where Garrett was well known and where he felt sure that, if the Kid was in or near the town, the sheriff would be able to ascertain the fact through a close friend there who could be depended upon to furnish reliable information. The greatest secrecy and circumspection was to be maintained. Nearly everyone in Fort Sumner was friendly to the deadly little outlaw, and he also had many friends in Lincoln. Should any hint of their intentions leak out, there was little doubt that the Kid, if still in that part of the country, would be promptly warned and this time leave New Mexico forever.

So Poe, for the benefit of any watchers who might be suspicious, headed leisurely and openly back toward White Oaks, endeavoring to leave the impression that his visit to Lincoln had been merely unimportant routine connected with his office. At Capitan he turned north in the direction of White Oaks, but bore away to the right after leaving town, circled the mountains and headed east. The next night he slipped unobtrusively into Roswell, where years later he was to become the town's leading citizen and president of its largest bank, and at an appointed place met Garrett, who had, while Poe was accomplishing his long and circuitous ride, left Lincoln after announcing quite frankly that he had business in Roswell and would be

absent until the next day. Both men felt sure no suspicions had been aroused by their actions in the mind of any sympathizer of Billy the Kid.

No time was lost in Roswell. Picking up another deputy named McKinney, the little posse rode south shortly before midnight until well out of town, then veered around until headed north toward Fort Sumner. Garrett was still inclined to consider the venture a wild goose chase, which opinion was shared by McKinney, but Poe was more certain than ever that evidence of the Kid's recent presence, if not the Kid himself, would be found at their destination.

During the journey, which consumed another day, it was decided that Garrett and McKinney were to remain out of sight on arrival at Fort Sumner, as both were so well known there that their presence would be sure to alarm the Kid's friends, provided the outlaw was really in the vicinity, and result in a warning being relayed to him. Poe, who had never been in the town or known Billy and his associates, and was thus not likely to encounter an acquaintance, was to boldly enter the place and endeavor to secure such information as he could, after which he would rejoin his companions to plan the next move.

Accordingly, after spending the night in the hills south of town, Poe left Garrett and McKinney and rode into Fort Sumner, where he headed for the largest saloon, believing that in an establishment of that kind he would stand an excellent chance of getting acquainted with men of Billy's type, and perhaps pick up some hints concerning the Kid or his whereabouts.

Representing himself as a miner on his way to his former home in the Texas Panhandle, Poe scraped acquaintance with several men in the saloon. Many drinks were bought and consumed, and the deputy was soon on a very friendly basis with his new friends, most of them evidently very hard characters. The town's population was mostly Mexican, and the few whites living there were all, with the exception of two or three, obviously in the criminal class. Poe did not wonder that Billy, if in the neighborhood, felt secure among such associates. Before he had been among them an hour he had come to the conclusion that taking the Kid away from Fort Sumner as a prisoner was going to be a

difficult if not an impossible undertaking. The whites there were decidedly in sympathy with the notorious outlaw, and to the Mexicans he was a hero and superman. There would certainly be active opposition to any attempt by the law to remove him as long as the law was represented by only three men.

Poe spent money freely, meanwhile keeping his ears open, and exerted himself to the utmost to gain the confidence and good will of the local badmen, who, hearing of the presence of a stranger in town, began dropping in to size him up. But in spite of his generosity at the bar and hints he let fall of an unsavory past of his own, he made little headway, due, he believed, to the character of the men with whom he was trying to ingratiate himself. Many he recognized as well known desperados against whom the law had various scores to settle, and men of that type, he knew, were habitually wary of strangers. For the most part they were polite, but distant, with a tendency to ignore questions that might be construed as pointed, and an obvious disinclination to take more than a minor part in the general conversation.

After a time Poe became aware of a growing coolness in the manner of the crowd toward him, probably due to some slip of his tongue, and he realized that suspicion was forming among them that he was not what he seemed. As soon as the deputy sensed this distrust he began planning to leave. He knew his life would not be worth a dime if any of these men should learn of his real mission or his affiliation with the law, and there was always danger that some one would come in to take a look at the stranger who would recognize him. He had learned nothing of value except that practically the entire town was hostile to the law. Billy the Kid had not been mentioned. Poe had not dared to bring up the subject himself, and no one else had done so.

Following a casual inquiry concerning the location of a restaurant, the officer, declaring himself ready for a meal, leisurely left the place. He did not mount his horse, but walked the intervening hundred yards from the saloon to the eating-house that had been recommended to him. He noted that several of his recent associates, evidently having made the sudden dis-

covery that they had business elsewhere, left the barroom immediately after he did, without appearing to do so, he observed that they kept him in sight until he disappeared through the doors of the restaurant.

Their actions, and the turn the situation appeared to have taken, would have alarmed many a brave man in Poe's position, but with no evidence of concern he proceeded to order a substantial meal, which he consumed unhurriedly and with relish. After eating he stood outside the place for awhile, then, as though having plenty of time on his hands, he sauntered back toward the saloon. Entering the place and buying a drink, he inquired of the bartender the location of possible accommodations for the night, and strolled outside again.

Poe did not doubt that he was in danger as long as he remained in Fort Sumner, and he was anxious to leave. There was an excellent chance, however, that if he attempted to do so he would be interfered with. That he was being closely watched was plain to his experienced eyes, and he felt that the surveillance was for the purpose of preventing his departure until the outlaw element of the town could make up their minds concerning him.

By waiting for darkness the deputy believed he could make his way out of the trap easily enough, but the sun was still many hours above the horizon and the long wait did not fit in with his present plans and his desire to be about them. And if, while he waited for the long afternoon to pass, someone should happen along who knew his real character, the chances were ten to one that he would never get out of town alive.

At this point, however, and just as he stepped through the door of the saloon into the street, an incident occurred that gave him an opportunity he was quick to seize. A sudden commotion in the direction of the restaurant he had lately patronized was followed by clouds of smoke pouring from the building, which in a very few minutes was afire from end to end. In the rush of spectators to the scene and the excitement incident to the formation of a bucket brigade Poe leisurely mounted his horse and walked the animal slowly up the street. Believing that he had been all but forgotten in the turmoil created

by the shouts of the fire-fighters and the roar of the flames, he continued on to the edge of town, where he ventured to increase his speed to some extent, and finally, feeling safe at last, rode away at a gallop to the north.

In this manner and because of an incident that proved fortunate for him, Poe got out of Fort Sumner, knowing that he had accomplished nothing there and hoping that he had not aroused more than casual suspicion which would be forgotten in the excitement caused by the fire.

He had one more card to play before rejoining the other two officers. Garrett had told him of a Mr. Rudolph who lived several miles north of Fort Sumner, and Pat had assured him that Rudolph was a law-abiding citizen and could be depended on to furnish any information in his possession concerning Billy the Kid that might be of value to the little posse. To Rudolph's ranch, therefore, Poe made his way.

But Rudolph, when Poe introduced himself and explained his errand, insisted that the Kid was not in the vicinity of Fort Sumner and to the best of his (Rudolph's) knowledge, had not been there since his escape from his guards at Lincoln.

Now, John Poe was of necessity a shrewd and observing man, and he felt sure he detected a false note in Rudolph's manner as the man assured him emphatically and repeatedly that Billy could not possibly be in the neighborhood. The deputy began questioning Rudolph searchingly, watching his reactions closely as he did so, and his suspicion that the rancher was concealing something became almost a certainty as his replies began to be contradictory and the fellow's manner more and more agitated.

Although he was unable to get Rudolph to admit anything openly, Poe felt that he had learned much indirectly from the rancher's uneasiness and clumsy attempts to mislead him. There was little doubt in his mind, as he mounted and rode away to the north, that Billy the Kid was either in or near Fort Sumner at that very moment, or had been within a short time.

Once out of sight of Rudolph's ranch Poe swung to the east and passing Fort Sumner at sundown, rejoined

Garrett and McKinney south of the little town shortly after dark. But his disappointment was great when his two fellow-possemen, after hearing his report, expressed themselves as positive that their quarry was not in the vicinity. Garrett seemed to place great confidence in Rudolph, and the fact that the rancher had insisted that the outlaw had not been in Fort Sumner since his escape from Lincoln apparently carried much weight with the sheriff. Poe, however, was certain that the rancher had lied, and although his two companions declared themselves ready to give up the quest and return to Lincoln, the deputy insisted so strongly that another effort be made to unearth the ubiquitous Kid that Pat and McKinney reluctantly consented.

The moon had not yet risen and it was quite dark as the men rode to the outskirts of town, tied their horses, and proceeded on foot, keeping out of sight of the townspeople. This was not difficult to accomplish, as the only lights came from various buildings and the streets were in deep shadow.

Garrett, who had lived in Fort Sumner, guided them to a house occupied by Mexicans where, according to Pat, the Kid would be almost certain to appear at some time during the night if he should be in town. The three men did not attempt to enter the house, but concealed themselves outside and waited.

Several hours passed, but the Kid failed to show up, and as the moon had now risen and concealment was increasingly hard to maintain, it was at length decided to cease their efforts at this particular place. Garrett and the deputy from Roswell were now insistent that the project be abandoned, but the obstinate Poe persuaded them to remain a little longer. A bulldog for persistence himself when pursuing a criminal, he found it hard to understand the readiness of the others to quit the hunt while there still remained the slightest possibility of success.

Garrett had mentioned another friend of his in the village, one Pete Maxwell, who lived on the opposite side of the town from where they now were. Poe proposed that they call on Maxwell, who owned considerable property in and around Fort Sumner, in the hope that the man might supply them with some information tend-

ing to support his own belief that Billy was not far away. He reasoned that a man as prominent as Maxwell must be more or less law-abiding and should be willing to cooperate with the officers.

Garrett consented to this plan, and they walked around the central part of town, still keeping out of sight as much as the bright moonlight permitted, until they reached Maxwell's residence, a long, low adobe building once used as officer's quarters when Fort Sumner had been an army post. A picket fence surrounder the house, and Poe observed that no lights were in evidence anywhere on the premises. Garrett, however, remarked that he knew the location of Pete's room and that the man was undoubtedly there asleep. He led the way through the gate, saying he would go in and awaken Maxwell, while McKinney stopped just inside the gate and Poe followed the sheriff to the steps leading up on the porch, where he sat down.

Pat walked straight across the porch to an open door which led, he announced, to Maxwell's room. The room itself was dark, but the regular breathing of some one sleeping there was heard, and Garrett, locating the bed by the sound, felt his way to it and awakened the sleeper who, as he had supposed, was Maxwell. Identifying himself, Garrett sat down on the edge of the bed and began to talk to him.

In the meantime Poe, outside, had scarcely seated himself and Garrett had been in Maxwell's room less than a minute, when soft footsteps were heard and a figure was seen approaching along the inside of the fence. Poe had barely time to note that the figure was that of a man who wore neither shirt nor shoes, when the newcomer hurried up and climbed the steps to the porch. There he collided heavily with the deputy, who was seated in the shadow and practically invisible to anyone coming into the darkness of the porch from the bright New Mexico moonlight outside.

Poe, apologizing, rose to his feet, and was surprised and a little angered when the man, whom the officer supposed from his dress and manner to be a guest of Maxwell's or Maxwell himself, suddenly whipped out a revolver and covered him, at the same time backing toward the door through

which Garrett had just entered Pete's room. At the same time the man began calling out in Spanish "Quien es! quien es?" meaning "Who is it?"

The deputy, considerably concerned over having startled someone who was evidently of or close to the Maxwell family, assured the seemingly excited man that he was a friend and regretted having frightened him. At the same time he began walking toward him, telling him to put up the revolver, which was still pointed unwaveringly at the officers's body.

John Poe had had a hard day, which perhaps explains why his mind at this time was not functioning with its usual clearness. He felt no great alarm as he advanced on the man with the gun, yet never in his life had he been in greater danger, because the gun was in the hand of Billy the Kid, and Billy, when in doubt about the intentions of a stranger advancing on him in the darkness, was not the man to hesitate about shooting first and asking questions afterward.

Evidently Billy's mind was also moving with unusual sluggishness this hot July night, and to that fact Poe probably owed his life. The Kid's mental reactions were normally lightning-fast. But for his almost uncanny ability to instantly grasp all the elements of a situation, analyze them correctly, and act on them unhesitatingly, he would have been dead long before the night on which he encountered John Poe on the porch of Pete Maxwell's house in Fort Sumner. Had he reacted to the sudden appearance of the deputy in his usual manner, Billy would have shot Poe when the latter made the first move in his direction. But on this occasion, for some reason that will never be known, he hesitated, and then backed quickly into Pete's room, still calling out in Spanish "Quien es?"

Poe then heard the man call to Maxwell, asking who the strangers were, and an instant later he was dumbfounded when the thunderous double report from a heavy caliber revolver roared in the confined space of the room.

Garrett, seated on the bed beside Pete, had heard voices outside and recognized that Billy the Kid. He swiftly drew his gun, and a few seconds later saw the dim outlines of the Kid's body as the outlaw slipped through the door and into the room,

calling to Maxwell. To hesitate at this point, or attempt to capture the Kid alive, would have demonstrated extremely poor judgement on the part of the sheriff, and no one knew it better than Garrett himself. He took quick aim and fired at the shadowy figure of the desperado, and at the same time, fully expecting a bullet from Billy's gun, he threw himself flat on the floor beside the bed. From this position he fired again almost instantly at Billy as the Kid was revealed in the flash accompanying the first shot. The second flash showed Billy slumping to the floor, and Garrett, feeling sure that one of his bullets, at least, had found its mark in the outlaw's body, but not knowing whether or not it had seriously damaged the man, regained his feet with a leap and sprang through the door.

Poe, his own gun out, was just starting to enter at the time, and the flying figure of his chief collided squarely with the deputy. Poe was knocked backward nearly to the steps, and there he was slammed into by McKinney, who was coming on the run and had just gained the porch. It was the third time in less than a minute that Poe had been banged about because of his apparent inability to be seen by people in a hurry, and he was suddenly conscious of a feeling of great irritation. Had Garrett not spoken quickly, identifying himself, it is possible there would have been more shots fired, as Poe, through a cloud of bright stars that seemed darting about his head, had drawn a bead on the dark form of the sheriff and was in no mood to hold back on his trigger-finger. Pat's words, however, cooled the deputy's anger as a dash of cold water would have done.

"That was the Kid who just ran in there on me, John," said Garrett, "and I think I have killed him!"

Poe was an efficient officer and had never been accused of slow-wittedness, but for once things were happening too fast for him to grasp. He had never seen Billy the Kid, and it was hard for him to believe that the man who had brushed past him and entered the room a moment before, who had held him momentarily under the menace of his gun, was the famous outlaw and killer he had come to Fort Sumner to capture or slay. He stood gaping at Pat for an instant, his brain whirling as it tried to catch

up with events.

"Yuh shore must be mistaken, Pat," he finally managed to say. "Yuh have probably shot the wrong man!"

"It was Billy!" insisted Garrett. "I knew his voice th' minute I heard it. It was him all right! He's in there now, and if he ain't dead there is goin' to be more shootin' hereabouts right soon."

Scarcely were the words out of Pat's mouth when another person burst through the doorway. It was Maxwell, almost frantic with fear, and again Poe found himself staggering from the impact of a human form against his own. It came very near to being Maxwell's last act, because the deputy, now thoroughly angry, not a little befuddled, and thinking the flying figure must be that of the Kid trying to escape, covered Pete instantly and would have killed him had not Garrett flung out his arm and knocked the gun aside, shouting "Don't shoot! It's Maxwell!"

The four men gathered about the doorway and stood listening for a few minutes, Poe, sore from head to foot from the battering he had received in the last few minutes and equally sore in mind at the thought of how he had, without raising a hand, permitted the Kid to literally walk over and past him, feeling as though he would thoroughly enjoy an opportunity to throw a punch at someone.

No sound came from the pitch-dark interior of the room, and Garrett, turning to Pete, asked him if there was a lamp inside. Maxwell, still shaking with fright, replied in the affirmative.

"We got to have a light here!" said the sheriff. "Whereabouts is th' lamp, Pete? Anybody got a match?"

In those days matches were not as plentiful as now, and a search of the pockets of the three officers failed to produce a single lucifer. Pete, being attired only in his underwear, could hardly be expected to contribute any.

"There's some matches by the lamp, I think, Pat," stammered Maxwell, still shivering.

"All right, boys, Pete an' me'll go inside an' light up," announced Garrett. "One of yuh watch this door an' th' other keep an eye on that window around on th' east side. C'mon, Pete!"

"W-w-what?" squawked Maxwell. "Me go in there! Not for a million

dollars, sheriff!"

"Come on!" snapped Pat. "I don't know where yuh're lamp an' matches are an' I ain't goin' tuh go blunderin' around in th' dark tryin' tuh find 'em. I'm deputizin' yuh right now an' orderin' yuh to come with me, Maxwell!"

"I ain't goin'!" quavered the man, obstinately. "I tell yuh I wouldn't go in there fer all th' money on airth, Pat! I wouldn't —!"

As before mentioned, Poe had had a very tough day. He had ridden many long, weary miles, had risked his life in a saloon filled with potential enemies from whom he had escaped only through a lucky accident. He had spent hours trying to pump a little information out of various individuals, with no success to speak of, and had spent more of them arguing with pat and McKinney as to the probable whereabouts of Billy the Kid and forcing them against their wills to continue the hunt for the desperado. To cap it all, after still more hours of wearisome waiting, the Kid had suddenly appeared and practically kicked him out of the way, after which Garrett, McKinney and Maxwell in turn had catapulted into him, knocking him down almost as fast as he could arise. He felt sure he had cut a rather sorry and ridiculous figure during the past five minutes, and was anxious to get the business over with. And now Maxwell threatened to delay things still further because he was afraid of the dark! Poe's temper broke bounds at last.

With a roar, he grabbed the stuttering and protesting Maxwell and slammed him violently against the wall, then, accompanying his movements with a broadside of strong language, he shook the man until the fellow's head seemed about to leap from his shoulders. At the same time he planted his right foot forcibly and frequently against a certain portion of Maxwell's anatomy, and was finally on the point of pitching the yelping Pete headlong into the room he so feared to enter, when Garrett and McKinney intervened and separated the two.

Even then Maxwell refused to go into the room. But he agreed to bring a light from another source, and hurried away around the house. In a few minutes he was back, carrying a lighted candle. This he tremblingly planted on the sill of the window

from the outside, thus casting a sickly, flickering, almost useless gleam of light into the bedroom.

Garrett and Poe, their guns ready, entered at once, while McKinney stayed outside warning back a gathering crowd of curious people who had heard the shots and ensuing commotion and were coming from all directions.

Inside, the sheriff and his deputy bent over the body of Billy the Kid. The outlaw was dead, a revolver lying near his right hand and a butcher knife in his left. One of Garrett's two bullets, evidently the first one fired, had struck the notorious killer just over the heart, and the Kid, survivor of scores of gun and knife battles, the most ruthless and dangerous man who ever roamed the West, had gone, following into oblivion the twenty-three men he had, in his short life of twenty-three years, sent over the same trail ahead of him.

* * * *

Sixty years have come and gone since the July night in 1881 when Pat Garrett's bullet ended the life of Billy the Kid and the era of lawlessness the Kid represented.

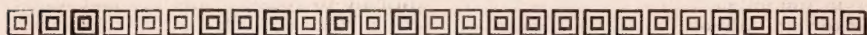
Many changes have taken place in the region once frequented and terrorized by Billy and his band of bravos. The dusty and difficult trails along which they galloped their horses, drove their bunches of stolen cattle or laid in wait for the unfortunates against whom they had designs, have become wide concrete highways over which a continual procession of gleaming automobiles slide swiftly and smoothly. The law, which once was little more than a name there, is now paramount in the peaceful and beautiful country that is the New Mexico of today. The rough life and hardships of three-score years ago have been replaced by the comforts and standards of a more advanced age.

The passing years, as sometimes happens in such cases, have even changed the popular attitude toward Billy the Kid. They have added to the glamour that surrounded him, while softening the harshness and brutality of his many crimes. His undersized form, which prudent people carefully avoided while it walked the land, has become a romantic figure in the minds of today's generations. The men he murdered lie in forgotten graves, their very names

difficult to recall, while the last adobe of the outlaw who slew them, where he lies in company with two of his desperado companions, has become a nationally known spot, indicated on all up-to-date maps of New Mexico. A monument has been erected over the place, only a few yards from where the gun of Pat Garrett ended the Kid's life, where his body is buried under the open plain that once was the little town of Old Fort Sumner. The State of New Mexico, which once paid Sheriff Garrett five hundred dollars for the work accomplished by his speeding bullet when it pitched Billy lifeless to the floor of Pete Maxwell's bedroom, has changed to such an extent that it is now rather proud of the savage little slayer who killed more than a score of its pioneer citizens before the persistence of John W. Poe and the courage and marksmanship of Pat Garrett brought him to a deserved end.

A few signs of those times, however, remain to remind one of the gun battles, strife and outlawry typical of the day of Billy the Kid, and chief among these is the Lincoln County Courthouse. There it stands, just as it stood when it made a fortune for its builder as "The Big Store." In appearance it is no different than in that long-gone day when the besieged Murphy faction, during the Lincoln County War, sheltered within its thick adobe walls while bullets from the weapons of Billy and his cohorts thudded against its whitewashed surface. Inside, the courtroom which was Billy's jail is still the courtroom in which are fought the legal battles of the county, and at the foot of the back stairway, which is still in place, one can still look up to the landing a few steps above and see the hole in the wall made by the bullet from the desperate Kid's revolver after it had split the heart of the fleeing Bell and tumbled the unfortunate guard lifeless to the foot of the flight.

The building is solid as the earth from which it was constructed, and in that land of sunshine, dry air and little humidity, it may, if unmolested by the hand of man, still be there a century or more hence, to bring to the minds of future generations that portion of the colorful history of New Mexico which was featured by the stirring events that occurred during the last days of Billy the Kid.



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